

MONTANA FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

Helena, Montana
1963

INFORMATION ON FISH FOR FARM AND RANCH PONDS

Before a pond can be stocked with fish from a State or Federal Hatchery, an application for fish must be filled out by the landowner or the lessee and submitted to the Fish and Game Department or to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Application forms are available at any of the seven District Fish and Game Headquarters located in Kalispell, Missoula, Bozeman, Great Falls, Billings, Glasgow, and Miles City, or any of the Soil Conservation Service offices. In requesting fish for a pond the owner should understand that fishing by the general public must be allowed, at least on a permission basis.

Species of fish presently available for pond stocking are bass, bluegill, catfish, pike and trout. If the pond is accurately described on the application for fish, a fisheries biologist can usually determine the species of fish that will be best suited for the water. The bass and bluegill are distributed in the fall from the Federal Hatchery at Miles City, the pike and trout in the spring. The fish are delivered to the nearest central point, and the applicant is notified well in advance as to when and where to meet the distribution truck to pick up the fish. If trout are requested or recommended for the pond the District Fisheries Manager or his representative must inspect the site before the plant is approved. The applicant will be notified of the approval or disapproval of his request for fish. If the application should be disapproved the applicant will receive a letter giving the reasons for the action.

In some cases a landowner with a pond too small to be managed for public fishing may wish to develop the pond as a private pond. A license for a private pond can be obtained at no charge from the District Fish and Game office for the area.

The application for a private pond license must be filled out completely, giving the legal description, ownership, size of pond, water supply, species of fish to be stocked and the source of the fish. Following receipt of the application a District Fish and Game Warden will inspect the pond site to determine that the pond has been created by artificial means and will check to see that the legal description is correct. Ponds on public lands are not eligible for private pond licenses. If the application is approved and a private pond license is issued, the District Fisheries Manager will approve the species of fish to be planted. This procedure is followed to prevent the introduction of undesirable fish or fish disease.

There are licensed commercial trout hatcheries in the state from which fish for private ponds may be purchased. A list of these hatcheries is available from the Fish and Game Department upon request. There are no commercial warm water fish hatcheries in Montana.

There is no closed season on private ponds except at the discretion of the pond owner. Only the private pond license holder and his immediate family may fish without a fishing license and without regard to limits or gear, except that explosives and poisons may not be used. Persons who fish on a private pond, other than the private pond license holder and his immediate family, must have a valid fishing license and must observe possession limits and the prescribed means of taking fish.